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Some of the plants used medicinally in New Ireland grow in India, and are used there also in medical practice, and their constituents and function have been analysed.[1] When known, the comparison with India is indicated. Two principles appear to underlie the use of native medicine. For external medicine, to cure inflammation and various swellings and sores, certain leaves are passed over the fire, and when hot pressed on the inflamed or swollen part. The principle of a hot covering for inflammation is a perfectly sound one. Internal medicine consists of chewing certain leaves supposed to have medicinal value and swallowing the juice from them. There is no knowledge of surgery nor of prophylactics nor of disinfectants. Of the seventeen specimens collected (and these are the ones most in use), there are six which might have a possible medicinal value, as they have similar value in India. Of these six, three are for external use to cure inflammation, one is useful in diarrhoea, and two others are used as an abortifacient. The value of the others is extremely doubtful.

Seven specimens were collected which were supposed to have an abortifacient function. One of these seven, *Rubus moluccanus*, has the same function in India. Four of them are used in India, but for different functions. Three are not known in India. Two of them have constituents which might make them useful as emmenagogues; the acanthaceous one contains a bitter alkaloid, and curcuma a volatile oil. But whether the leaves contain sufficient quantities of these to make them efficient is very much a matter of conjecture. It seems rather unlikely that seven plants, all with the function of an emmenagogue, should be growing wild in this one place, and it is probable that if I had gone thirty miles in either direction I might have collected seven completely different specimens with the supposedly same function.

Native medicine seems to be about equal in accuracy to

[1] Nadkarni, K. M., *The Indian Materia Medica*, Bombay, 1927.

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much of other native knowledge of natural phenomena, none of which approaches real scientific accuracy.

The following is a list of medical specimens, giving their native name, their botanical species, their use in New Ireland, their use in India, and their constituents and possible action when known:

Didil: Crinum asiaticum L. (Amaryllidaceae). To cure swelling in leg. The leaf is put over the fire and then over the swollen part. In India the leaves are warmed, or mixed with oil, and form an application for inflammation, and the leaves and roots are also used as an emetic.

Twislguruth: Cissus simplex Blanco (Vitaceae). To cure swollen neck. The leaves are rolled up together, passed over the fire, and when hot put on the swollen part.

Päpis: Ficus (sp. not known). Leaf of this tree given to a baby for diarrhoea. Baby chews the leaf, swallows the juice from it, and then spits out the leaf. *Ficus benghalensis* is found in India, and is useful in dysentery and diarrhoea, also tonic and astringent.

(Native name lost) Vitex sp. (Verbenaceae). Used to cure a headache. The leaves are rolled together, held over the fire, and then applied to the forehead and temples. In India there is the same use for headache, and it has also other uses there (to dispel inflammatory swellings of the joints, acute rheumatism of the testes, etc.). The leaves contain a colourless essential oil of the odour of the drug and a resin.

Itis: Rubiaceae. Leaf of the tree used to cure sharp pains in the stomach. Leaves passed over the fire and when hot pressed against the stomach. Not known in India.

Utmet: Callicarpa (Verbenaceae). Used to cure pain in shoulders. Leaves passed over fire and when hot pressed against the shoulder. In India, decoctions of the root given in cases of fever and to remove hepatic obstruction. Used also in skin diseases. Action: Refrigerant, hepatic stimulant, demulcent and emollient.

Banana. Leaf passed over fire and used as compress.

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Kutkut, also *Goragora:* Alpinia sp. (Zingiberaceae). Used for bleeding cuts. Leaves passed over fire and then put on cut. In India, a different use, namely in dyspepsia, fevers, catarrhal affection; paste made with oil and applied locally in skin diseases. Constitutents: camphoride galangin and alpinine.

Kumboomba: Solanum verbascifolium L. (Solanaceae). Used to cure pain in stomach. Leaf chewed and juice swallowed.

Agigitin, also called *Gungarau:* Acanthaceae. Used to produce abortion. Leaves chewed and juice swallowed. Constitutents: bitter alkaloid, an organic acid, fatty matter, chlorophyll, and soft resins. Acts as an astringent and nervous tonic, expectorant, and stimulant. Used in India for these purposes.

Rada: Curcuma (Ginger aromatic). Used as abortive; leaves chewed and juice swallowed. In India, used as aromatic adjunct to other medicines used in skin diseases and impurities of blood. Constitutents: volatile oil, resin, starch, sugar, gum albuminoids, and curcumine (yellow colouring matter).

Wuzawuza: Urena lobata L. (Malvaceae). Used as an abortifacient. Leaves chewed and juice swallowed. In India, root is used as an external application for lumbago and rheumatism.

Wäsinow: Dryopteris sp. (Polypodiaceae). An abortifacient in New Ireland. Not used in India.

Putsila: Rubus moluccanus. Used as an abortifacient. Leaves chewed and juice swallowed. Similar use in India, where the leaves are also considered a powerful emmenagogue and abortifacient. Also used to cure diarrhoea. The bark and leaves are considered astringent and contain tannin ten per cent.

Kuskus: Coleus sp. (Labiatae). Used as abortifacient. Leaves chewed and juice swallowed. In India, mixed with sugar and given to children in colic; used in asthma, chronic cough, gonorrhoea, piles, and dyspepsia, and crushed leaves for headache. Action: antispasmodic, cathartic, antilithic, stimulant, stomanture.

Kilkin: Clerodendron. Used as abortifacient. Leaves chewed, juice swallowed. Not used in India.

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Bunglä: Zingiber (ginger). Used to cure swellings of skin; magic said over the leaves, which are then chewed and expectorated over the swollen part of the body. This, it is believed, makes the skin hot and the pain disappears. In India it is used as an aromatic stimulant, carminative, and stomachic; externally, as a local stimulant and rubefacient. We use mustard, which is a bit stronger than ginger, in the same way as a counter-irritant.

A large number of folk-tales and myths, handed down orally from one generation to another, form the literature of these people of Lesu. The tales contain moral precepts, theories of origin, accounts of semi-historical and imaginary happenings, and are counted as knowledge in this community. They are told in their proper context throughout the book.

MAGIC

The Lesu man's knowledge of his natural world may seem very inadequate to us, who have accumulated a more extensive, although still very incomplete, information. Yet limited as the information of these Melanesians may be, the Lesu man is well integrated with his natural world, because he thinks he controls it through magic. For whenever the Lesu man or woman feels uncertain of his own ability to control a situation he uses magic. To control the weather, to ensure a good crop, to make certain of a good catch of fish, to have success in his courtship of a woman, he has recourse to magic.[1]

MAGICIANS

Both men and women are magicians, although the former predominate. In Lesu there are thirteen people

[1] The pragmatic function of magic was first brought out by Professor Malinowski in his studies of the Trobriand Islanders. See his "Magic, Science, and Religion," in *Science, Religion, and Reality*. Ed. by J. Needham (1921).